August 2006

Celebrating Ypsilanti's vintage antiquities

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

Depot Town Rag

Volume 21, Number 4

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

We're in the crosshairs of annual history-fest

Thousands, from history buffs to carnival groupies, will come down the hill in August to look at this old neighborhood and wonder why we don't wake up and get modern. Give them a big smile.

Everything old is new again

Twenty-eight years ago there was a gas shortage (at 91¢ a gallon) and Ypsi folks decided to have a festival that would keep people at home that summer since they couldn't afford to travel far. The 1978 recession found many locals too poor to get modern, so they just cleaned up the old stuff they already had and started to like it even more than before.

With its several antique shops and nineteenth century commercial buildings, Depot Town seemed the perfect place to focus on things "old fashioned."

You can still find vintage items like cars, furniture, jewelry, glassware, clothing, buildings, and manners in Ypsi's old railroad disctrict.This issue highlights those businesses and others that have joined them in promoting all things old.

Let's all go to the "This Used To Be Ypsilanti Festival"

People continue to gather at the banks of the Huron River to celebrate their involvement in their community. Riverside Park, Frog Island Park, and Depot Town are the locus for locals who celebrate historical hoopla annually

Early Heritage Festival rides were discontinued in favor of just coming out into the streets and looking at each other for three days

Welcome back to the good old days

The 28th Ypsilanti Heritage Festival shows the old railroad district to folks who may have forgotten that the trains are still running. Although the lines of tourists are a lot longer when hundreds crowd into the block in one three-day weekend, the flavor of reality is still here—if you look hard enough.

Rather than glance disparagingly at those who seem to be "discovering" the charming locals down at the depot, most regulars recognize the benefits of such a mass introduction. Many of the folks who ogle us in August come back during the rest of the year to see if we're really that real.

Service organizations quickly realized the benefit of this annual review. Rather than compete with each other's fundraising efforts, Kiwanians, Rotarians, and Lions actually share the same event tent for the breakfasts, dinners, and other events that support their programs through the rest of the year.

Raffles like the Rubber Ducky race not only draw attention to the benefits for winners, but give sponsoring organizations an accurate accounting of the scope of their public relations. The subsequent mailing lists help them organize promotions for the rest of the year.

Depot Towners are always torn by the great hordes of tourists these few days. Some visitors will find the district for the first time, but they need to remember that it doesn't look like this for the rest of the year. It's really historic—and not at all museum-like. Locals just hope that, after this crowded preview, these new folk will come back and rediscover our authenticity when the streets are full of "normal" people again.

Many have testified how they gave it a chance, came back and bought an old house, designated *their* table at their favorite eatery, or even opened a business of their own.

And the kids: Kids seem to come back after school and on weekends and enjoy this old block just like their parents and grandparents did. They are the proof that these are still the good old days.

Antique shop sign:
"Nobody cared what your grandma had except your grandpa!"

Ypsilanti's first Heritage Festival (1978) was called the "Ypsilanti Yesteryear Heritage Festival," giving way to the sobriquet "Yester Festers." The "yester" part was dropped for the second year, but the "heritage" and "fest" parts carry on.

Early news from the "Hysterical Society"

G. Frank Allmendinger, Secretary of the Michigan Milling Company, in 1900 served on a citizens' committee which had been formed to consider various methods of paving the streets of downtown Ann Arbor. The committee was bombarded with proposals, some so costly and unrealistic that Allmendinger reacted to them in a jocular fashion at a meeting of the Board of Public Works. *-Wystan Stevens*

-From the ***Ann Arbor Courier-Register****, March 21, 1900.*

ELABORATE IMPROVEMENTS

G. Frank Allmendinger Suggests Artistic and Aesthetic Changes for East Huron Street

At the meeting of the board of public works Wednesday night G. Frank Allmendinger, of the citizens' committee on East Huron St. paving, submitted the following sarcastic recommendations:

"As the plan for improving Huron street seems to be growing and to be no longer confined to paving, your board is respectfully requested to recommend to the council the following, which is largely derived from proposed improvements at Oak Park, one of Chicago's finest suburbs.

"That the houses shall be painted in colors which agree, the same to be selected by an art committee which shall also agree on the style of bill-boards to be employed, the lettering on the delivery wagons and the shade of color to be used on the fire hydrants. All weak-kneed telephone poles to be straightened and the art committee to have them painted with a perpetual rainbow effect. No more chicken feathers to be thrown on the street, cuspidors of elaborate design placed at intervals and a rug with the word 'Welcome' placed at each end of every crossing.

"Lawns shall be cut in a uniform style, certain flowers shall be grown and there shall be a definite plan for fences and outbuildings. All lawn mowers shall be decorated with yellow and blue ribbons and a beautiful bouquet of Jack roses suspended from each street lamp.

"Each block will trim its shade trees after its own design. House dogs must be regularly groomed, the dogs in the upper square to have each a ruff about the neck, while those in the square above Fifth avenue shall have their tails trimmed lion fashion.

"The butcher's boys shall be dressed in immaculate white and leave a bunch of violets or lilies along with their veal or roast beef.

"All the men in the square from Fifth avenue to Division street shall wear their hair trimmed alike and grow mutton-chop whiskers. Those in the square above shall have their hair cut pompadour and wear imperial goatees. The esthetic effects thus produced will be worth a trip from Europe, but the last proposed improvement will be one of utility as well, since if any of the gentlemen get lost at night it would materially assist the police in locating their residences."

Nature is hidden now

Yesterfesters should know that Riverside Park does not always look like this. This carnival atmosphere only takes place one weekend in August. Most of the rest of the time this is a natural and beautiful place.

Edward Penet lives in a house that backs up to Ypsilanti's Riverside Park. He wrote the following poem in response to poetry.com's exercise: The singing of the birds…

Oriole, Your Morning Song Raises Me

Oriole, your morning song raises me
Up in the heat of a new orange sun
And out of myself, my bed, my house
—in air
I soar over the Huron with you,
a gull and a heron.

I ride a breeze
as the heron dives to the East.
I circle with killdeer
as the gull flutters to feast.
I imagine myself ever higher
above the Riverside
Park and am quickly cooled
by a cloud in flight.

Suddenly, I turn, then ease so softly
Into my bed, and dare to open an eye
To assure myself I am
—what are these feathers?
They are but the stuff that
dreams are made of.

-Copyright © 2006 Edward G. Penet

SIDETRACK Bar and Grill
rated by GQ Magazine - Top best Burger in the country
56 E. Cross Street 734.483.1035
Reserve FRENCHIE'S for your next meeting
20% off entire meal

See this old block on the World Wide Web:
www.depottown.com

Aubree's DEPOT TOWN
Best Pizza in Town • Happy Hour Specials Daily • Tiki Bar Patio
39 E. Cross Street • 483-1873
10% off your entire meal

Cady's GRILL & BAR
A New Dining Experience!
new menu ▪ superb collection of wines
36 E. Cross Street ▪ 483-2800
10% off your entire meal

CAFE LUWAK
Ice Cream
Deli Sandwiches
Coffee Drinks
42 E. Cross Street
734-482-8050
FAX: 734-482-FOOD
Info@cafeluwak.com
www.cafeluwak.com
• Deli Sandwiches on Fresh Baked Bread
• Homemade Soups and Sides
• Espresso & Coffee Drinks
• Stroh's Premium Ice Cream
Call or visit our web site for information on our catering services

Silver Spoon Antiques

27 E. Cross St.

Mary Ellen Antonelli brought her Silver Spoon to the block in 1997, specializing in vintage jewelry as well as ladies' vintage clothing and accessories.

Why are there so many people in the street?

Depot Town folk not only stand around on the sidewalks and gab, but they stand in the streets as well. They stroll, jog, meander, and saunter all over the district and, in doing so, seem to encounter a lot more neighbors that way. Experts recognize that efficiency:

"You can get a whole lot more people to an area and through an area on foot than you can in cars," said Jonathan Levine, to *The A2 News* last March. Levin is chair of the Urban and Regional Planning Program at UM's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. "That's a surprising result because we think the more speed, the more (people)."

"Well, actually that's not the case," says Levin, "because cars take up a lot of space, and when they are traveling fast they take up even more space because they have to have a lot of space between them."

"The number of cars that can reach a particular area in a given time is quite limited, and the number of cars that can circulate through a particular area in a given time is quite limited. The number of people on foot who can circulate through the area and, incidentally, spend money at local businesses, is really much greater."

Ad Art
♦ concepts ♦ designs ♦ screenprinting ♦ ad specialties
Diane C. Brown
• 236 Kirkley Dr., Brooklyn, MI 49230 • (517) 592-8708
• e-mail: dianebrownadart@aol.com • FAX: (517) 592-3585

the gifted basket
Gift Baskets & Goodies for all occassions corporate & personal
734.480.0764
35 E. Cross Street
www.gifted-basket.com
10% off one regular priced item

Old Ann Arbor High about to be demolished

Let's help Ann Arbor catch up on its history

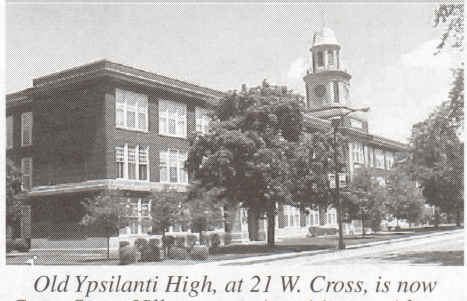
Don't be too hard on Ann Arbor. They celebrate their history in their own way. There is no Ann Arbor Historical Society, but there is an ordinance in place to highlight some history for them to celebrate.

Ann Arbor has set aside 13 historic districts that include 1662 properties, but there's no A2 Historical Society. The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission has set aside ten different districts outside of A2 and fifty-five designated County properties carry historical markers. Historic Districts are governmental; historical societies are not.

There are private, nonprofit, historical societies for Washtenaw County and in the communities of Dexter, Saline, Manchester, Milan, Ypsilanti (2), and Pittsfield Township.

Historic preservationists from around the county and state could help Ann Arborites catch up with their historical roots.

Let's all pitch in to help them out with a lesson in appreciating their history.



Old Ypsilanti High, at 21 W. Cross, is now Cross Street Village, a senior citizen residence, just up the hill from historic Depot Town.

On the World Wide Web:
www.depottown.com

HARRINGTON'S
STANDARD PRINTING
In historic Depot Town
John & Pattie Harrington
120 East Cross Street 734.483.0339
Ypsilanti, MI 48198 fax 734.483.3130
email: info@ypsistandard.com

James MacDonald's Antiques & Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing

29 E. Cross St.

Don Broersma tends the counter for Jim MacDonald and Lynn Radtke, who brought their unique shop to the block thirty years ago—the longest name and the longest time on the block for a Depot Town antique business.

Historic/historical?

What's the difference between "historic" and "historical"? Would you say that, for instance, the Civil War barracks in Depot Town was of "historical interest" or would you say "historic interest"? Or can they be used interchangeably?

No, the terms are not interchangeable, though, curiously, something can be both historical and historic. "Historic" refers to what is famous, important, or somehow decisive in history. ("The Boston Tea Party was a historic event.") "Historical" refers simply to anything that occurred in the past whether it was momentous or small and inconsequential. ("The details were rendered with historical accuracy." "The actual historical battle was not at all like the movie version.") So, technically, anything that occurred in Depot Town in the Civil War is of "historical interest"—but the only remaining northern Civil War barracks is undoubtedly also of "historic" interest.

Depot Town Counseling Center
Therapy for adolescents & adults
Diane Louise Parfitt, Ph.D., LPC, LLP
Medical Acupuncture
Brenda Donaldson, M.D.
Inner Wisdom: Philosophical Counselor
Kate Mehuron, Ph.D.
302 N. Huron • 734-481-1200

SILVER & GOLD COINS
Olde Towne Coin & Gold
Certified Member ANA/JA/PNG/MRA/N.F.I.B.
In historic Depot Town for 25 years
24 E. Cross Street 734.483.6155
FAX: 734.485.8300

Salt City Antiques
15 E. Cross St.

Carol McEachran brought her antique mall from the great salt marshes of Saline in 2004. Her multi-dealer consignment shop is on the site of the 1800's Drubel Mill--one of 53 mills that crowded the Huron River between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor.

Quinn's Essentials
19 E. Cross St.

Sarah Musil, Valoree Sprentall, Ray and Mary Beth Strassel celebrated their seventh anniversary in Depot Town this summer. Most of Quinn's antiques are the ancient and elegant display cabinets that show off their creative interior design talents.

In the September *Rag*:

We blow our own horn with postcards from Depot Town to show how we have bragged on ourselves over the years. Local collectors will share some prizes of yesteryear that were sent from down by the depot to family and friends all over the world.

Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 970235
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
To the editor:
thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Pattie Harrington, Vice President
Ray Strassel, Treasurer
Sandee French,
Secretary & Past President
Kim Tucker,
Marketing Committee chair
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Harrington's Standard Printing, 120 East Cross Street.

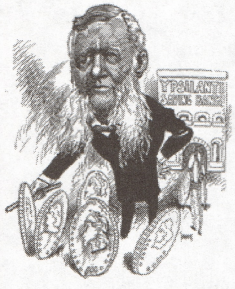
Early Ypsi leaders lampooned in popular press

There has always been a Comedy Central, even before the popular cable TV channel. Ann Arbor historian Wystan Stevens sends these early cartoons of Ypsilanti leaders.

A gallery of pen sketches in black and white of "Our Michigan Friends as we see 'em", is presented by the Newpaper Cartoonists' Association of Michigan [Detroit, W. Graham printing co., c1905].

This is a collection of cartoons and caricatures of Michigan's business leaders, professionals, politicians, and other notables drawn by cartoonists from such newspapers as the *Detroit News* and the *Free Press*. The subjects are treated as a pantheon of "Michiganders––who perform their share of the world's work in such a manner as to bring them into public notice."

Each illustration combines a realistic portrait of the subject's head with a caricatured body, and shows him performing activities associated with his particular calling. Icons, symbols, and stereotypes facilitate instant recognition of the trades, businesses, and professions represented. There are no women included, and ethnic minorities are occasionally portrayed in a disparaging manner.



R.W. Hemphill, cashier, Ypsilanti Savings Bank

Dwight, Stanley, and Hemphill became the street names dedicated on the Peck farm, north of Forest Avenue.

Daniel L. Quirk, president, First National Bank

From his home in what is today's Old Town Hall, Quirk worked a backyard garden that eventually became Riverside Park.

Edward P. Allen, lawyer

Often confused with one of the founders of nearby Ann Arbor, Allen has not been widely remembered in Ypsilanti history until now.

J. B. Colvan, president Ypsilanti Underwear, Inc.

Travelers on the Michigan Central Railroad were treated to a giant billboard of a woman in her underwear—on the side of Colvan's mill just west of Frog Island.

July's drawing winner is...

...Bill Kittle, who filled out his coupon (*see below, left*) while waiting for his wife who was shopping at Salt City Antiques in July.

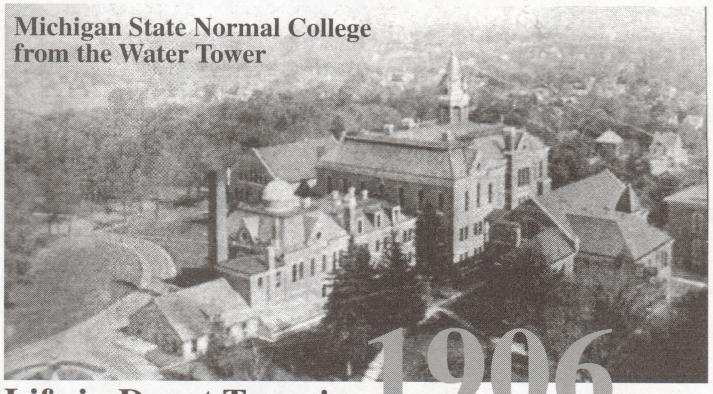
Kittle has lived on Country Lane—near Rolling Hills Park in Augusta Township—for 27 years. He says he hopes to drive his classic 1969 Plymouth Roadrunner to the Depot Town Cruise Nights soon—whenever he can find the time to get the transmission back inside the car.

Monthly drawing COUPON (August 2006)
Win 25 Depot Town Dollars

Name _____
Street _____ City _____ ZIP _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Business entry location _____

Deposit this coupon with any participating Depot Town business

Quinn's Essentials
19 E. Cross Street
734.544.4690
Home Decor, Unique Gifts, Jewelry, Clothing
TempuPedic™ Mattresses
Pandora Jewelry & Troll Beads



Michigan State Normal College from the Water Tower

Life in Depot Town in 1906

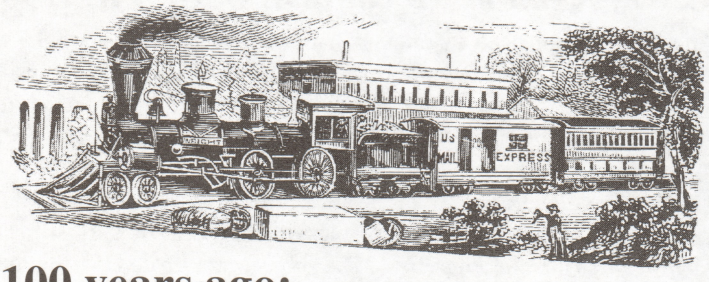
Richard Russell's collection of conditions of the period can be a microcosm of life at the depot in Ypsilanti.

- The average life expectancy in America was 47.
- Only 14% of the homes in the U.S. had a bathtub.
- 18% of American households had at least one full-time servant or domestic.
- Only 8% of the homes had a telephone.
- A three-minute call from Denver to New York City cost $11.
- Sugar cost $0.04/pound. Eggs were $0.14/dozen. Coffee cost $0.15/pound.
- There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S. and only 144 miles of paved roads. Cross Street was not among them, but Congress (Michigan Avenue) was.
- The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California.
- The average wage in the U.S. was $0.22/hour. The average American worker made between $200–$400/year.
- A competent accountant could expect to earn $2000/year, a dentist $2,500/year, a veterinarian between $1,500–$4,000/year, and a mechanical engineer about $5,000/year.
- More than 95% of all births in the U.S. took place at home.
- 90% of all U.S. physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as "substandard."
- The leading causes of death in the US were: pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis, diarrhea, heart disease, stroke
- The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.
- The population of Las Vegas, Nevada was 30.
- One in ten American adults couldn't read or write.
- Only 6% of all Americans had graduated from high school.
- There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire U.S.

Yesterfesters, beware! Those *Good Old Days* may be coming back again

Yesterfesters congregate here near the end of August every year to celebrate everything old—old houses, old cars, old recipes, old songs, old people, and many of the same old stories.

One can barely get through a meal in any of the district's restaurants without overhearing at least fifty people telling how good everything was in the *Good Old Days*. But, alas, nostalgia's not what it used to be. A quick check of local history finds facts too often overlooked, forgotten, or ignored.



100 years ago: Were *those* the Good Old Days?

In 1923 Harvey C. Colburn noted in his *Story of Ypsilanti*, "the decade is not one of material growth. Indeed, the census of 1910 is to show a loss in population..."

"Various reasons have been advanced to account for the condition. Material reasons, it is conceded, could be blamed in part only and it may well be supposed that the compelling causes were rather of a psychological nature. In brief, the same conditions seem to have obtained, in a degree, that militate against the prosperity of any community or indeed the progress of a true civilization. These conditions were the old social sins of mutual jealousy, suspicion and the presumed protection of personal and factional interests as against a broad and unselfish spirit of cooperation toward desired ends."

1900-1910 in Ypsilanti:

Shelly Byron Hutchinson built his dream mansion just a block from the depot. The Michigan Ladder Company was founded and the First National Bank Building and Grinnell Company's Music Store opened. Forest Avenue Bridge was erected and an eight-room Woodruff School was built at Gilbert Park. The Quirk receiving vault was dedicated at Highland Cemetery and the African Methodist Church was built.

Oil was suspected to be found on the Martin Cremer farm on the flats south of town. Colburn notes, "Nothing was wanting to insure the success of the occasion except the presence of oil."

Ypsilanti Food Co-Op
and the River Street Bakery
312 North River
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
734-483-1520
Fresh Bread in the tradition of hearth baked artisan breads available Monday Wednesday and Friday evenings

Baked-on Automotive Finishes • Complete Collision Repair
CITY BODY EST. 1930
20 E. Cross St. • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
734.482.4737 • 482.9353 • FAX: 482-0181
SCOTT SOBBRY BRUCE SOBBRY

Edward Jones
Serving Indiviudal Investors Since 1871
2058 Washtenaw Avenue
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Les Heddle
Investment Representative
Business: 734-480-8980
Fax: 888-817-0043
Toll-free: 800-440-0657
Cellular: 734-223-0433
Residence: 734-528-9145

How to avoid that cloud of SMUG coming from the west

Some think the SMUG on the horizon west of Ypsi could be caused by people driving hybrid vehicles; others contend it was caused by jealousy over housing conditions.

Ypsilantians, however, can avoid the condition of SMUG by following a few simple precautions:

- Avoid bumper stickers proclaiming, "Born and bred in Ypsi," "I'd rather be in Ypsilanti," or "Ypsilanti Native."
- Wear colors other than Eastern Michigan University's green and white and call the school "Eastern" or "EMU," not "The University." It's too late to say, "The Normal."
- Cross the street with the light.
- Keep your rental properties up to code.
- Don't park cars in your front yard.
- If you live in a high-rise downtown penthouse, don't complain about the view blocked by other high-rise penthouses.

Following these simple precautions should help to keep you in touch with the rest of the world and avoid isolation from the important things in life. Do not let that cloud of SMUG hover over your Ypsilanti home.

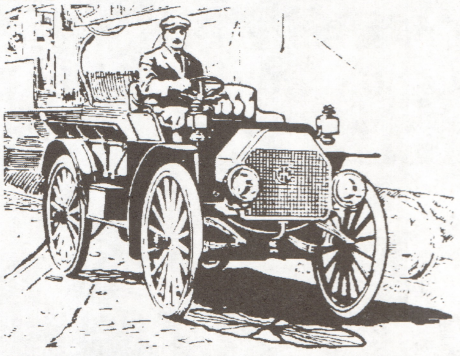
Vital Signs
YPSILANTI
SIGNS • BANNERS • VEHICLES • WINDOWS • LOGO DESIGN
17 E. Clark Road Ypsilanti, MI 48198
VITALSIGNSYPSI@COMCAST.NET
734-483-5701
New location
River St. & Clark Rd., 1 Mile North of Cross St.
Bill Labedzki, owner

World of Rocks®
Crystals, Minerals, Fossils and Beads
Custom Beadwork • Handwrapped Specialties • Findings • Classes
734-481-9981
www.worldofrocks.com
I-94, Exit 183
42 N. Huron
Just south of Depot Town

Sheila M. Johnson Lander C. McLoyd
Law Offices
Johnson & McLoyd, PLC
Depot Town
308 N. River Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
734.544.4500 FAX 734.669.9081

RAGTIME Coming events

Heritage lives here



28th annual Ypsilanti Heritage Festival

18, 19, 20 August

Celebrate Ypsilanti's long and distinquished history in Riverside Park, Frog Island, Depot Town. Highlights include Heritage parade, arts and crafts, historic architecture, Millionaire's Party, music, autos & engines, and lots of food.

Fallapalooza in Depot Town w/ EMU's annual Family Day

Saturday, 7 October

Register as a street fair vendor or sign up for the Family Scarecrow Contest via Fallapalooza@yahoo.com

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market

May-October

Wed, 8 a.m-4 p.m., Sat, 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Depot Town Cruise Nights

Vintage automobiles and hot rods up and down the block 5-9 p.m. every Thursday through mid-September

Choose your lane carefully
..from Ford Lake through Depot Town and Ypsilanti's Historic District
on to Strip City and you could end up
in the Athens of the Mid-West

Help pave the path to history!

Depot Town Brick Campaign Phase 4

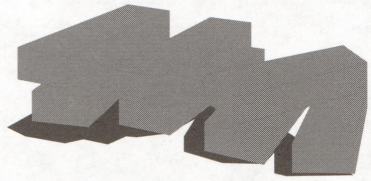
More bricks are coming!

Personalized bricks will be used to create pathways next to both Aubree's Saloon and Quinn's Essentials. Preserve your memory or honor someone with a personalized brick.

Purchase bricks at Cady's, Aubree's, Gordon's Five & Dime, The Gifted Basket, and Garrett's Florist.

More info: Kathie Garrett at kathie@garrettlandscape.com or at Garrett's Florist (734) 480-0022

A display will be installed for viewing at Garrett's Florist, 950 N. River Street. Updates can be found on the Depot Town Website: www.depottown.org.



Bricks will be installed as early as this summer. Check the Website for updates! Funds will enhance Depot Town by creating traffic-calming crosswalks at the intersections of Rice & Cross and Ninde & Cross.

Home Makeover Specialists!
Looking for the latest in window fashions & floor coverings? It's easy to find the perfect color & style when you have an expert visit your home with Michigan's Largest Mobile Selection—And it's FREE!
Since 1952
Esquire INTERIORS
734-663-7011 • www.EsquireInteriors.com

ENCHANTED FLORIST, inc.
46 E. Cross St. • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
(734) 547-9230
"Service with a personal touch."
Specializing in all of your personal & corporate needs
$5 off an in-store purchase of $19.95 or more
free local delivery on arrangements of $29.95 and up (a value of $7.95)
Only one offer can be used at a time. Not valid with any other offer or in-store specials.

GORDON'S FIVE & DIME
popcorn • ice cream • penny candy • old fashioned toys & home goods
Katherine Gordon
Shannon Gordon
owners
Toys & Treats for Kids and Kids-at-Heart
23 E. Cross Street
734.482.1830
Fax 734.482.1831